Politics and Power: A Gendered Perspective from South Asia

By Farida Shaheed

A basic dilemma in discussing politics and power from a gendered perspective arises from the traditional concept and definition of politics, and of what is included and what is excluded from this purview. The dictionary definitions of politics focus on government: "art and science of government"; "public life and affairs involving authority and government"; "activities concerning the acquisition or exercise of authority or government." In the dominant (male) discourse, these definitions translate into the process of accessing and influencing state power. This narrow focus ignores the fact that the exercise of authority permeates all spheres of life, extending well beyond the processes of government, at whatever level. Since women have traditionally been (and continue to be) largely denied formal office and power, such definitions exclude much of the daily concerns and struggles of women.

Yet if politics is about acquiring or exercising authority, then it necessarily encompasses contestations over authority and the power bases used for such contestations that, in turn, relate to influencing decisions, challenging ideas, and mobilising support for one's opinions and actions, either to maintain or to change the *status quo*. In this broader understanding, engagement in politics is an everyday occurrence practised by all, male or female. It starts at home in interpersonal relations and continues to the international level. When a girl wants to carry on with her studies but fears opposition from her father, she could identify and mobilise one or more allies—be it her mother, aunt, brother, or someone else to intervene on her behalf. This is a political act and one that, indeed, relates to power. The nuclear and/or extended family, the neighbourhood or village, and the broader community are all sites for the negotiation of rights and space, where power is flexed subtly or brutally, authority is exercised and challenged, and the game of politics is played out, even though we are not used to thinking of these as a continuum of the political process. Yet when a few thousand girls mobilise support to pursue their education, these individual acts and negotiations are transformed, in our imagination, to a movement to which we then assign both social and political significance.

At each juncture, from the individual/local to the international, the interplay of power may involve overlapping and conflicting power bases and contestations for both supremacy and popular adherence/loyalty. Allies at one level or on a particular issue may become opponents at another level for another issue.

Women engage in these processes in different capacities: as "women," of course, but also, and not infrequently, primarily as members of other collectivities and identities, including class, ethnic, religious and professional ones. Indeed, "group membership and the categorical definition by gender, nationality, religion, ethnicity, 'race', ability, age or lifecycle stage ...determine [women's] access to entitlements and their capacity to exercise independent agency" (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999). The framework within which women engage in processes of negotiation as individuals or as collectivities can thus differ radically, depending on their social, economic and cultural locations within a state, but, equally, according to the issue at hand.

It is not possible to cover in a short paper, let alone do justice, to the wide-ranging ways and various levels at which women engage in, or are affected by, the politics of power. Given the current worldwide emphasis on women's access to formal state power and decision-making, this paper, while mindful of the complexities involved, will focus on women's interaction with, and access to, power and politics in the more formalised political process, directly relating to states and governments in South Asia. It raises some of the issues concerned with the various spaces available to women at different moments, the strategies used by women activists to increase these spaces, and some of the more disconcerting contradictions.

The Framework of Nation-States

No state or society is gender-neutral. In order to attain, assert and access rights, women have to draw upon inventiveness as well as determination to find or create ways of influencing processes that affect their personal and collective lives in an obstacle-ridden playing field. The many forms of women's activism are played out at multiple levels. The unceasing deployment of survival strategies by individual women in their everyday lives is complemented by more collective forms of resistance and assertion aimed at institutionalising sustainable and structural change. Intervening at the community, national and international arenas, women's strategies range from using personal relations and connections so as to access and exercise state power, to public protest and taking up arms.

But despite all the struggle and activism, the worldwide paucity of women in authoritative positions and decision-making bodies—as we enter the twenty-first century—is a disturbing reflection of how little power women still exercise in arenas where public policy is made and economic decisions are taken. This dysymmetry led participants of the Fourth World Conference on Women to demand, through the Beijing Platform for Action, "measures to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures and decision-making." Recognising that exceptional women who make it into the higher echelons of power have not broken the glass ceiling for women but rather have risen through the seams, a global consensus is emerging on the need for women to constitute at least one-third of decision-makers in all structures of power. It is hoped that once this critical mass of women decision-makers is in place, women would be in a better position to transform the body politic into a vehicle that is responsive to their needs and desires.

In every state, it is worth remembering that sex and other factors like class, race, age, and ethnicity continue to be the basis of differentiated entitlements and treatment. Not too long ago, states unapologetically conferred citizenship status and associated rights to select and specified male groups, and denied these to all women and various religious, ethnic or racial groups (Evans, 1977; Callamard, 1997; Shaheed 1997; Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999). To obtain recognition as (equal) citizens of the nation-state, women and other excluded groups have had to engage in a continuous struggle.[1] As the privileged and legitimised framework for negotiating the responsibilities and rights of a group or collectivity, and a sharing of power in the context of nation-states, the formal political process is, indeed, important. This process is not limited to the electoral process, and includes all formalised channels of state-citizen interaction. Opening up discourses and debates, conferring or challenging authority, the political process is also the site of ideological contests between competing constructions of a collective self that inevitably includes constructs of gender. Thus, even when women themselves are not principal actors, these dynamics have an impact on their lives, making it imperative for women to find/or create the means to intervene, either directly or indirectly. Women's ability to do so, of course, depends on the existing framework for intervention: the structure of the state, the availability and nature of the formal political electoral process, the historical specificities that shape a particular society and state, and the openings and opportunities that these provide.

The South Asian Context

South Asia is second only to Scandinavia in having had more women heads of government than any other region in the world. It presents an interesting case study of formal state power and women's strategies, of the disjuncture between local realities and national policies, and of the striking involvement of women in a wide range of social and political movements, including several that are ideologically conservative, militant, and diametrically opposed to the concept of universal rights.

In many ex-colonial states, pre-existing forms of self-governance dominated by the local elite, for example, the *panchayat*, *jirga*, *salish*, or other forms of informal self-governance, have not only survived in the modern nation-states but, in some instances, seem to be enjoying a revival. These

power structures were only partly dismantled, integrated into, or replaced by, the modern states' alternatives, mostly in urban centres. In the predominantly agrarian societies of South Asia, even today, the power structures continue to be major determinants of people's lives. In many ways, these non-state institutions mediate interaction between people/citizens and the distant, if modern, state. Hence, for many citizens of South Asia, the immediate community retains its primordial place in people's lives, where favours or privileges are sought and allegiance owed; where access to power is determined, contested, gained, denied, or lost.

In the absence of a widespread consciousness, much less an implementation of the concept of entitlement to rights as citizens, there has been a large-scale appropriation of the modern state's mechanisms by the traditional power elite (ASMITA, 1999), who are then able to simultaneously perpetuate local power structures and mould the "new" state institutions to their purpose. Frequently, this situation happens when those who head traditional structures are elected and hold office in formal state structures while still exercising decision-making in the non-formal structures. The set-up has two consequences for women's access to power: 1. women are rarely able to access any power through the informal governance mechanisms (*jirga, panchayat, salish*) because they are usually excluded from these structures; and 2. because these non-formal forums exercise a more immediate control over women's everyday lives than do the formal institutions of the state, they also obstruct women's access to openings to power and participation provided for in the new structures of the state by enforcing cultural notions of limited female roles and activities. Examples of these cultural notions are exclusion of women from decision-making about the family and community, limited work for women outside their homes, limited female mobility, among other notions.

In several South Asian states, military and/or authoritarian rule has impeded the emergence of a democratic ethos that would open up some channels for the empowerment of discriminated groups, including women. Even where democratic rule has prevailed mostly uninterrupted, as in India, the concept of democracy has been almost entirely reduced to an electoral process devoid of mechanisms that would ensure that elected representatives are made effectively accountable to their constituents.

While formal, de-personalised structures of state and politics do exist, the dynamics of real power in South Asia remain intricately linked to family and personal connections, as epitomised by the Gandhi dynasty in India's politics, and also evident in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The issue goes far beyond leadership. Formal channels and structures of political power in the region are seriously threatened by the politics of informal power brokerage, and systems of patronage overshadow the formal systems of governance. Consequently, the exercise of real power is often indirect and, as philosopher John Stuart Mill had postulated, being divorced from accountability and responsibility, it is essentially irresponsible.[2] The disruptive potential of indirect and irresponsible power is amply demonstrated in Pakistan by the influence wielded by politico-religious parties that, until recently, have never won any significant number of seats in parliament yet exercise tremendous political leverage. A similar situation seems to be emerging in Bangladesh. The exercise of indirect power is, nevertheless, based on providing tangible proof of power, often by creating law-and-order situations and/or disrupting the normal flow of things. By comparison, women's capacity to demonstrate such power is marginal.

For many people in South Asia, the political process has come to be seen less as a means of pursuing an ideological vision and social justice than as a means of achieving power, accumulating wealth and distributing state benefits to specific groups of citizens. Many states have what is known in Bangladesh as *montri polli* or "minister's ghetto," that is, "a culture of loyalty and class interest in which power is exercised through a wide network and political nexus to enhance the interests and influence of the elite across divisions of ideology and principle" (Mannan, 1992). Government instability bolsters this syndrome. As one frank politician explained, "We know our representative posts may be called off at any time. So what we do during our tenure is to maximise our profits and our wealth." (Mannan, 1992).

A regional study on women, state, and governance confirmed that women share this perception and believe that many politicians use their political power to amass personal fortunes and power (Tambiah). In one Pakistani village, women who had denied any interest in politics but who said they discussed developments in Bosnia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere explained that, for them, "politics" was a question of who competed for and won political office. It was not a process they were interested in, since who won or lost made no difference to their lives (Shirkat Gah, 1999). The reorientation of the political process from the pursuit of an ideal to a process for attaining tangible material benefits is being further accelerated by the principles and values promoted by the New World Order.

The failure of the state to deliver the services and benefits promised by sovereign status, to dispense impartial entitlements to its citizens, and to evolve integrated nations has resulted in the very concept of nationhood becoming one of the most volatile political issues of South

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Asia. The region has witnessed a growing legitimacy of essentialist or "exclusivist" politics of identity, both ethnic and religious. Though, in some cases, this form of politics seriously challenges the very existence of the state, such as in Sri Lanka, it often initially inspires allegiance and support as a vehicle for demanding a better deal for a selected group within the state. Of immediate importance to women are the tensions and contradictions that are played out between "the constructs of citizenship and nationalism," between the "will to be modern" and the "demand to exist and have a name" that characterise much of South Asian politics. Cast in the role of the cultural bearers and reproducers of the chosen community/nation, through their embodiment of the construction of gender, women's lives and struggles are often situated at the crossroads of the conflict between the modern state's impulse to homogenise its citizens albeit in the mould of dominating state structures emphasising rationality, individuality, and the rule of law, on the one hand, and the constructs of nationalism(s) that evoke emotional ties of soil and blood, and demand primordial loyalty, on the other (Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999).

Women's Activism

Women have adopted a wide range of strategies for accessing power and intervening in the realm of politics:

inserting their agendas into the existing discourses, or leading their own movements, forging alliances, negotiating rights, and creating their own strategies and organisations. Autonomous women's organisations were an important vehicle for self-expression in South Asian nations even before their independence. Women have been part of trade unions and student unions, and have been active in human rights, advocacy and development non-government organisations (NGOs). They have been important players in social movements concerning issues that affect them directly as women and, equally, their families and/or community members. Some campaigns, like the anti-alcohol campaigns, have been women-specific. Throughout South Asia, women have participated in legislative processes and in political parties, and also as activists of political groups and movements outside the electoral process.

Substantial systemic and structural constraints notwithstanding, women have managed to broaden their access to power and influence in the formal political process. By their interventions, women have transformed their own lives and, by their actions, have expanded the space available to other women, at least of women in their own "group" however that is defined. (Admittedly, this has sometimes been at the expense of the rights and spaces available to another set of women.) They have used opportunities and openings strategically, often consciously, but sometimes unconsciously. Success has depended on the particular circumstances and configurations of power as well as on the inherent strength of the group/individuals involved and the actions and strategies employed. Backlashes and reversals have been part of the process.

Political upheavals and intense political mobilisation have provided women with unmatched opportunities on more than one occasion. In what constitutes contemporary India, despite attempts of women to gain voting rights, both the 1909 Indian Councils Act and the 1919 Government of India Act excluded women. Women were finally included in the Government of India Act, 1935,[3] thanks to the support of Indian men who forged an alliance with Indian women in opposition to the colonial power. Yet women's demands "to be returned to power by the open door of competition" so as to avoid perpetuating the belief of inferiority was rejected (EKATRA, 1999). Indian women gained the right to be participants in their country's affairs only as marginal players.

Nevertheless, if mobilising women by lending support to women-specific demands was merely good strategy on the part of male leaders, there is no doubt that nationalist movements provided women unprecedented opportunities. In a pattern common to many colonised societies, nationalist movements became the principal framework for much of women's civil and political rights initiatives

{reinterpreting notions of power}

(Jayawardene, 1986; Badran, 1995). Women harnessed the energies released by intense political activism and the power of their own participation to modify their own lives "to an extent hardly credible," as one contemporary described it (Cousins, 1941). Another woman activist of the time recalls that by bringing "women into the forefront of public life…the political struggle had somehow generated such enthusiasm that all prejudices and taboos seemed to have been swept away" (Ikramullah, 1963).

Women who joined the anti-colonial nationalist movements in the belief that this would simultaneously be the vehicle for emancipation and for universal citizenship wereto be disappointed, however. Though independence brought women *de jure* rights as citizens, it simultaneously eroded and reined in the space for radically altering gender equations while providing few women public office and power. Having depended on the support of indigenous men in an alliance directed against an "alien other," women would have to learn how to effectively lobby with, and organise in opposition to, indigenous male power after independence.

Many decades later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the popular uprising initially led by students that resulted in the overthrow of the military rule of Ayub Khan in Pakistan (and what is today Bangladesh) provided a similar opening. The subsequent political mobilisation towards elections in 1970 included women in numbers that had not been seen since the nationalist movements. Women were involved in electoral parties as well as in political movements not interested in contesting elections. In West Pakistan, the mobilisation led to the creation of numerous women's rights groups, many with political undercurrents. In East Pakistan, mobilised women joined the Bangladesh independence movement, sparked off by army action after elections. Despite the brutality, including gender-specific violence of horrific proportions, and possibly because the violence so fundamentally disrupted all social norms, activists expanded their space and agency not just as Bengali nationalists but as women as well.

In Sri Lanka, against the backdrop of a country devastated by ethnic conflict and reprisals by the State, the Mother's Front (a grassroots women's group) was created in July 1990 by women of the Sinhala majority ethnic community. The women had the fairly simple objective of protesting the "disappearance" of some 60,000 young and middle-aged men. The Front managed to break the immobility of a society that seemed paralysed by a stranglehold of terror. At its peak, this group had mobilised a membership estimated to be over 25,000 women. The idiom of motherhood used by the Mother's Front was non-threatening both to the State and to the women who joined the group, and, being so, created the space to intervene in

difficult circumstances. The fact that the Front consisted of Sinhala women, and made little attempt to link up with minorities, probably accounts for its ability to intervene without facing reprisals that may have been directed against women with a similar purpose from another ethnic background. In fact, the Sinhala Mother's Front overshadowed and blocked the actions of mothers of Tamil (minority) women, who had earlier started a similar initiative.

The importance of this short-lived, if large, group of women related less to its specific activities and direct achievements than to the impact it had on the general political space at a particular historical juncture. By counterpoising motherhood to politics, while intervening in the political process, the Mother's Front focused attention on , and brought into the national agenda, a vital issue that other groups had failed to bring into the open. The Front repeatedly asserted that it was neither political nor anti-government but, at the same time, identified State actors as perpetrators of the "disappearances," and made the head of State, the President, its key target. By its actions, the Front "opened up the space in which a much larger, non-racist and more radical protest movement could be launched" and simultaneously "gendered the discourses of human rights and dissent" (de Alwis, 1998).

In Pakistan, women's rights activists consciously used the difference between what is popularly conceived of, or defined as, "political" and what is excluded from this, in their struggle under the military dictatorship of Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s. At the time, political parties and all forms of political manifestations were banned while women's rights were being rescinded at an alarming rate, and the contours of womanhood were being redefined by the State's aggressive media campaigns, policy statements and directives. The Women's Action Forum (WAF), a platform created in 1981 to bring together a wide range of activists and actors who had led the women's rights movement for a decade, evolved a number of creative responses in the face of adverse circumstances (see Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987). One strategy was to declare itself non-political. It was not that leading activists saw a disjuncture between politics and women's rights. This conscious decision was taken with two aims in mind: First, there seemed little point in inviting the military to ban the group before it had even started functioning. Second, the label reassured many women who were mobilised on the women's rights platform but were wary of "politics." WAF then exploited and pushed to the limits the narrow space provided by the ambiguities in public perception of what is defined as "politics" (as in attempting to gain State power or overthrow the incumbent rulers) and "women's rights activities." The latter were forwarded as a continuum unrelated to who was in power at a given moment, and divorced from the struggle for political power. Notwithstanding demonstrations, pickets,

and pamphleteering—all of which were technically banned—WAF maintained the stance of being non-political in all interactions with the authorities and in its statements. This, even while lashing out at each discriminatory policy, directive, and law suggested or promulgated by those in State power. After the return of democratic processes, it modified its stance to one of being politically non-aligned.

A considerable proportion, possibly the vast majority, of women's "civic participation," whether in South Asia or elsewhere, has been local. Though this local activism is often a major factor in shaping women's political consciousness at a wider level (Werbner, 1999), such actions have mostly gone undocumented. Understanding women's local activism and how this does or does not link to national initiatives may be the key to understanding how best to bring about a synergetic relationship in women's activism at all levels.

In South Asia, a striking and documented example of local activism is the anti-liquor campaigns undertaken by women in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The anti-alcohol campaign of Andhra Pradesh, for one, illustrates women's ability to successfully intervene in the political process on "non-political" platforms, and to challenge the local power structures. It also underlines the fact that local initiatives often do not start from the theoretical premise of expanding women's rights and power, even though this may be an end result. (See box.)

The Anti-Liquor Campaigns by Indian Women in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh

Starting in the Nellore district in 1990, the Indian women's anti-alcohol campaign was spearheaded by poor agricultural labourers of *dalit* households and supported by voluntary organisations. The campaign focused on the cycle of violence perpetuated by alcoholic men. Many of the *dalit* women were breadwinners for the family. The women, in addition to suffering the injuries of violence, saw their hard-earned cash being poured down their men's throats. Undoubtedly, the women's earning capacity was itself a source of power that emboldened them to assert themselves. But the women enhanced this power by appealing to and enlisting the independent power base of religion, in the shape of priests and the temple. Women pressured men into taking an oath of abstinence at the temples, and they got the temples involved in monitoring alcohol abuse. Simultaneously, women organised themselves to take on those elements involved in the sale of liquor and promotion of the trade. Pooling their own energies, women intervened physically to prevent their menfolk from going to liquor dens. They stopped sale by destroying shops and dens; countered the joint attacks of

drunken men, police and thugs; and demanded an end to the practice of paying male labour in the form of liquor.

Attesting to its success, the movement forced the Andhra State government to ban the sale of *arrack* (liquor) in October 1993. However, the women were up against a strong political nexus between the liquor trade and politics, and the collusion of the State institutions of the police and administration. These networks minimised the ultimate impact of the women's movement, first through strong-arm tactics and, subsequently, through administrative measures. In Maharashtra, for example, the government responded to the movement by saying that liquor would be banned in a given area, provided that half the women in the *gram sabha* (local government) so voted. In theory, this may seem reasonable. In practice, however, this condition greatly dilutes the provision. The conservative social environment prevents women from attending meetings and/or does not allow them an effective voice, when present. In urban areas, this provision becomes meaningless because ward meetings are simply not held. Another insidious measure is making revenue from alcohol a source of funding for the rehabilitation of the victims of alcohol-induced violence. In effect, this means that such programmes can only increase their budgets by increasing the source of the problem, that is, the sale of alcohol (Ramesh and Narayanan, 1988).

Evidently, even though women's anti-liquor campaigns made an important impact on the local situation and, undoubtedly, empowered the women involved, something more is required to ensure that women's efforts transcend the local arena. The experience also shows that local initiatives need to be linked to measures and support mechanisms that will allow them to resist and, where necessary, take on the male-dominated political and administrative set-ups. One possible way to make this happen is through inducting a larger number of women in the political set-up.

Women and the Electoral Process

In South Asia, a few exceptional women have always managed to hold key positions of power, and women have been heads of state and leaders of the opposition in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Nonetheless, there is the low number of women contesting elections and in leadership positions of political parties; women represent no more than five percent to 10 percent of the central legislatures;[4] and far fewer women than men formally join political parties. Women's political experience of participation is largely confined to casting their votes. Surprisingly few women—estimated at two percent in Pakistan (Shirkat Gah, 1999)—have any experience of attending meetings and political events, even when they keep themselves informed of political developments.

Improved social indicators for women do not automatically open the doors to political power. Representation and participation remain low even in Sri Lanka where the social indicators of health and education are exceptionally high, and labour force participation rates significantly higher as compared to other South Asian countries.

On the whole, fairly rigid structures of patriarchal control limit women's agency and mobility. Self-serving notions of male honour and of female shame systematically obstruct women's access to public spaces, simultaneously blocking access to basic amenities such as health facilities, education and employment, and, equally, to the political process. Notions of honour are justified by reference to culture and/or religion, with the latter being used by those in and out of power to promote, justify and mobilise support for their political not religious agendas. Furthermore, as noted in Nepal, "public mobility emanating from cultural values or from economic survival strategy" does not necessarily translate into public activism in the political or "modern" arena (Shtrii Shakti, 1999). In communities where women have traditionally enjoyed more mobility, they may be excluded for reasons that relate to their community rather than to their gender. In Nepal, the modernisation agenda has focused on promoting women who have traditionally not had mobility while those with traditional mobility lag far behind in the formal political process.

Differentiated access to resources and the varied spaces available to women from different classes, cultures, and regions within countries and across the region modulate the varying scope for women's public political activism. As a class, women's access to power is curtailed. Women were never part of the traditional structures of local power that have functioned as the springboard for much of the national level political leadership in, for instance, tribal and feudal contexts. They have also not played a significant role in local dispute resolutions or mediation that could also be the basis of public influence. Finally, women's lack of autonomous financial resources has always been an impediment. But in today's political scenario, where the expenses involved preclude the participation of even middle-class men, lack of finances has become an almost insurmountable obstacle to women's entry into national (and provincial/State) politics (Shirkat Gah, 1999). Consequently, the opportunities for women to break into politics independent of family connections are few and far between.

Women who gain prominence in the political arena frequently inherit their power base from male relatives. This is a syndrome that, such as in the violence-prone politics of Sri Lanka, has led to the label of "over-his-dead-body" politicians. Though male opponents tend to disparage and attack such women as mere male surrogates, it should be remembered that inheriting political power is equally true of most male politicians. Rather than an indication of female corruption or incompetence, this indicates the lack of institutionalisation in the political process and in the functioning of political parties.

In assessing the impact of women politicians, it is important to remember that "women enter politics within highly patriarchal structures of society and operate within those self-same limitations" (ICES, 1999). Obliged to work in an environment dominated and shaped by men (who have also devised the rules of the game), the success of women politicians depends on their ability to adapt to that environment and to play by the rules set. That most abide by these rules is evident in their willingness to participate in the seedier side of political manipulations, and, even more sadly, when they become party to the perpetuation of violence in politics, as it happened in Sri Lanka in the January 1999 elections (ibid).

In any case, activism should not be equated with human rights agendas, or women politicians with feminists. The political parties joined by women are not feminist, and even the most progressive have limited agendas on women. Most women politicians adhere to their party's political agenda, which may be antithetical to women's rights in general or to the rights of particular classes or groups of women. There is no reason to expect successful women political leaders to champion the cause of women as a

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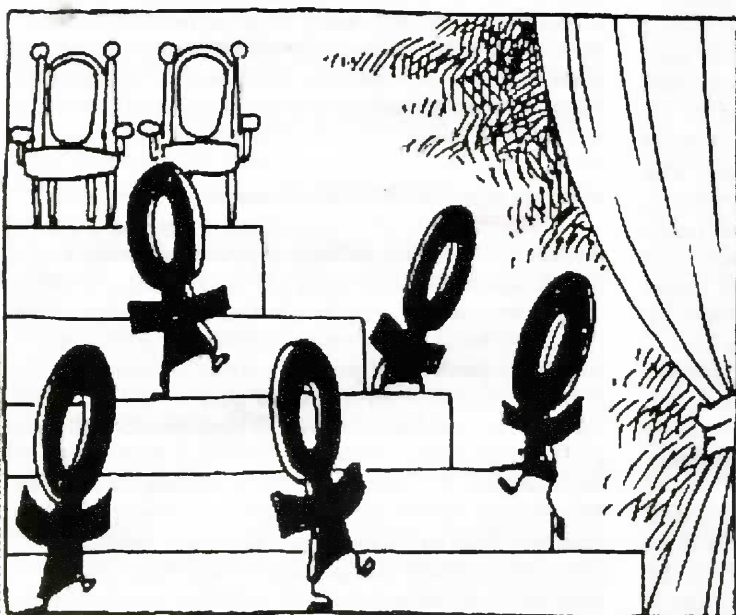
class. In fact, whether in South Asia or elsewhere, "the more women establish themselves, the more they also participate in the dominant value system, which excludes women and men from discriminated-against groups" (Rommelspacher, 1999).

Even presuming good intentions and perspective, women face considerable obstacles within political parties that provide far greater opportunities for upward mobility to men than to women. Where they exist, women's wings of political parties are rarely integrated into the central power structure of the parties. Functioning mostly as mechanisms for mobilising support for specific parties, these wings may actually further marginalise women by limiting their presence and activism to this auxiliary role, bereft of any real political power. But whether women's wings exist or not, few women are part of the executive decision-making bodies of any political party. The difficulties of making headway in political parties is such that some women believe that advances can only be accomplished with the patronage of a male political leader. Faced with disparaging attitudes and the vulgar behaviour and language of male politicians and colleagues, only the most determined or committed women accept the challenge of asserting themselves in this atmosphere, whether at the local or national level.

Women politicians are also unlikely to challenge the structures that have brought them to power, even if to help pave the way for other women who, in any case, may be perceived as current or potential rivals. Attesting to a certain political sophistication, South Asian women themselves rarely view women politicians as champions of women, especially when the latter win in open contest with men. In the pursuit of power, it is not uncommon to find women politicians distancing themselves from women as a class, and to championing causes and issues defined by or related to the general welfare of the "community" or class (for example, peasants, workers). Obviously, basic amenities like water and the rights of peasants and workers are as relevant to women as they are to men. But the lack of attention paid to women's issues and the absence of a gender perspective indicate the adoption of a male-determined perspective of priorities and political issues, and a belief that women as a class are powerless. Women in politics can thus reinforce the concept of women being adjunct constituents rather than being a political force needing to be addressed or mobilised.

Though the presence of women and their issues in parliament and policymaking is marginal, women are recognised as vote banks, and politicians, both male and female, increasingly address issues of concern to women during election campaigns. Unfortunately, the attention to women's issues rarely survives beyond the electoral campaigns. Of course, this can be said of many electoral campaign issues and party manifesto declarations. However, commitment to women's rights is especially fragile, inevitably the first to be sacrificed in any political negotiations and maneuvering that take place during or after elections (Zia, 1999).

It is not self-evident that women exercise their right to vote autonomously. Studies indicate that the family is primarily responsible for the political socialisation of women. Though they acknowledge their family's influence, only a minority classifies this as "undue pressure." Given unequal power and decision-making within the family, "voting according to family patterns and traditional family affiliation" effectively means that men often determine how women use their vote (EKATRA, 1999; Shtrii Shakti, 1999; Shirkat Gah, 1999). Voting by men and women is also subject to the control and pressure from locally influential persons who, especially in rural areas, continue to exercise largely unchecked, and sometimes absolute, power at the community level.

Given that South Asia remains predominantly rural, a basic question is thus raised about the effectiveness of the electoral process as a means of democratic governance in the absence of measures that would break the hold of the local elites. In Pakistan, frequent disruptions of the democratic process have undermined the participation and representation of any political actor, whether male or female. In Nepal, the democratic process was only revived in the last 10 years and is again facing challenges. But even in other states where the electoral process has remained largely uninterrupted, women's intervention or influence in mainstream politics is marginal.

Happily, there seems to be a growing consensus among women from all classes and cultures in the region that they should participate in the political process, even though they do not necessarily expect this increased participation to significantly improve the process as it exists today. Nor does this general support for women's inclusion translate into an active desire for personal engagement in the political process. Interestingly, women place the lack of (sufficient) education, mobility, and resources at the top of the list of impediments to their self-actualisation and participation in politics. Yet in South Asia, it is precisely the highly educated and mobile women of the urban middle-class, with relatively greater resources, who are least willing to engage in the political process. In some ways, women's access to political power may be plagued by their internalisation of the limited housebound roles for women defined by their society.

It is also important to remember that not all women's political participation is positive or even desirable. Not only

have women leaders shown their willingness to participate in the seedier side of politics, with its manipulations and violence, but an increasing number of women also seem to be attracted to political parties and groups whose agendas appear antithetical both to democracy and to women's empowerment at any level. In Pakistan, at least two of the more important religiously defined political parties have not only a surprising number of women workers but committed women activists who participate enthusiastically in meetings, rallies and public demonstrations. These women are active proponents of a particular point of view on gender, and strongly oppose the agenda of women's rights activists. Their presence on the political scene encourages decision-makers to sideline, water down or ignore the demands articulated in the more democratically inclined, pro-human rights agenda of other women. One of the attractions that such groups hold for women is that they allow for an expanded space for women's agency within "protected boundaries". They also offer "some valuable resources for women integrated with the family and community...[they] help women's transition from a domesticated to a more public domain, with the support and consent of the family and with the comforts of the old, inherited, safe and uncontested values intact" (Sarkar, 1999; Shaheed and Mumtaz, 1990).

Affirmative Actions

Given the severe constraints in women's access to power and political processes, affirmative actions, such as reserved seats for women in parliament and quotas in government service, have been long-standing demands of women. Except for Sri Lanka (where a bill in under consideration), all South Asian states have initiated affirmative action for women at different levels of government. Several states have measures reserving quotas for candidacy (like Nepal) or reserved parliamentary seats (like Bangladesh and Pakistan). Male-dominated structures have never willingly shared power with women. The very fact that affirmative actions have been introduced, and that more are under consideration, attests to the ability of women to intervene in the political field and exercise some influence, both inside and outside the formal political process. On policy matters, at least, it seems that women have developed the ability to devise effective intervention strategies. Not all affirmative actions have been equally effective, however.

Opinion is divided on the effectiveness of reserving candidacy, seats, or membership of political parties. In Pakistan, for instance, reserved seats for women were introduced in its Constitution of 1956, and women were granted a double vote: one, for a general candidate, and another, for a women's constituency-based candidate.[5] The 1965 Constitution changed the modality: women's reserved seats were no longer filled through direct elections but by an electoral college of assembly members. The loss of direct elections and the de-linking from a constituency reduced women on these seats to mere tokens, bereft of real political power. This modality suits male-dominated political parties since it provides them with an opportunity to increase their share of assembly seats without, in any way, obliging them to commit themselves to women's issues. (The electoral college was maintained in the 1973 Constitution that provided for reserved seats until 1988. Despite women's protests, the indirect mode has been revived with the new reservation of women's seats in 2002 in far larger numbers in the national and provincial assemblies and, for the first time, in the senate, the upper house of parliament.)

By themselves, these measures do not significantly promote the acceptance of women as political leaders. In Nepal, for example, none of the major parties nominated women candidates in excess of the minimum number stipulated in its Constitution (five percent). Nor has the Nepali Congress party been able to fulfil its constitutional provision of having women fill 10 percent of committee positions at all levels of the party. In Bangladesh and Pakistan, the provision of reserved seats has discouraged women from contesting open seats. Few of the women have entered the assemblies through the hard route of political campaigns and constituency-based work. Male-dominated political parties deny women the opportunity to contest general seats. They say that since women can always be accommodated on reserved seats, it is only fair to give men the maximum opportunities in open contest. Even if many women are themselves inclined to take this "easier" option of entering politics, in many ways, indirectly elected reserved seats for women undermine women's political participation. They do not provide women with a training ground for learning the rules and gaining political experience vital to the growth of women's political leadership and power. They make women entirely dependent on, and accountable to, the male-dominated assembly members. They leave women voters unrepresented in the legislatures while allowing policymakers to say that they have met the demand for women's representation. Finally, they reinforce the general impression that women are only adjuncts to the political process, and not main players.

Yet with all these failings, and despite some soul-searching and criticism from women's groups, most women agree that reserving seats and candidacy has, at least, ensured the physical presence of some women in legislatures and political parties. And despite their lack of real power, women on reserved seats in Pakistan, at least, have actually spoken up on women's issues, and used some of the parliamentary procedures to draw attention to these (Mumtaz, 1998). If the need for reservation measures is generally accepted, the debates usually focus on the

modalities and percentage shares of stipulated seats. Many South Asian women activists favour the *panchayati raj* institution of India as the most effective model to-date.

In *panchayati raj*, a rotating 33 percent of all local government constituencies are reserved for women. Only women can contest, and both men and women elect them. This provision brought in a staggering one million women representatives in the three specified tiers of local government in India, through electoral processes involving five million women contestants (EKATRA, 1999:10). Affirmative action measures for local government in Bangladesh have also inducted large numbers of women into the process, but the modalities adopted represent a less radical re-orientation of the political scenario.

The *panchayati raj* experience of India is encouraging. The concept was first launched in India's Karnataka State in 1983, reserving one-quarter of the seats for women, an experiment that strengthened the status of local government. The 1987 State elections held under the new provision had political parties scrambling to find 14,000 women candidates. Not surprisingly, female relatives of male politicians formed the bulk of women candidates. Even now, in many States, women elected to the *panchayat* are "proxy candidates" put up by their male relatives. Yet for many women, the experience of being public representatives has changed their own perceptions about politics and about themselves. After coming into the *panchayat*, an encouraging number of women began to actively participate in the proceedings and learn the ropes (Ramesh and Narayanan, 1998; Kaushik). Women's participation still faces obstacles. In many places, women have faced resistance and hostility from political parties. A number have had to face a backlash, including efforts to unseat and harass them. Some, especially women from the lower castes, have been the victims of violence against themselves and their properties. In 2000, Pakistan introduced similar measures (reserving 33 percent of seats in the lowest tier), bringing in some 36,000 women into the three tiers of local government. There, too, women have faced violence, including rape.

The local configuration of power and the cultural environment dictate the extent to which this measure has been an effective means for women's entry into politics. The *panchayati system* is less effective in the more tradition-bound and conservative Indian states, where women function as male proxies, never attending meetings and only putting their thumbprints where instructed by the men. Nor has the system given the most marginalised groups of women access to power. Most of the women elected, especially the *sarpanch*, still belong to the better-off local families. This trend is reinforced by the propensity of the electorate to vote for educated candidates (Kaushik).

Nevertheless, the changes brought about by *panchayati raj* are significant, especially in view of the obstacles faced by women.

The problems enumerated by women members and candidates include illiteracy, lack of economic resources, an unfriendly social environment, and a disabling *purdah* system. In the process of electioneering, women candidates say the pressures of household and family responsibilities handicap them. Rampant corruption, abusive language, violence, and underhanded tactics and strategies that mark the general political scene also permeate *panchayat*-level politics. A consistent complaint voiced in South Asia by women representatives at all levels is the unco-operative attitude they face from both the male-dominated bureaucracy and male politicians who try to dismiss or marginalise both women's participation and their agendas. Men try to actively dissuade women from even attending meetings, let alone assuming the responsibilities of elected representatives. When women do participate, they find little support for their programmes, and even less funding. A major part of a politician's work in South Asia consists of intervening to ensure that state institutions are delivering services or responding to the needs of constituents. This process handicaps women in all tiers of political office, as they find the state's institutions far less responsive to women than to men in equivalent situations (Shirkat Gah, 1999; Kaushik).

Women *panchayat* members themselves express the need for increased formal education as well as training in political and administrative procedures. Even at the higher levels of governance, it is clear that women politicians have insufficient knowledge of the political system and lack lobbying techniques. Power needs to be further decentralised and local government strengthened so as to strengthen affirmative action at the local level of government. Specific funds allocated for women would greatly enhance the effectiveness and, therefore, power of women representatives, enabling them, in turn, to empower other women.

While some women have adopted the style of male politics, a greater number seem to adhere to the idea of a representative and responsible democracy. Through their actions, a sizeable number of women are attempting to build a new culture of political activism (Kaushik:31). The extent to which this exciting experiment will be able to transform the dominant political processes remains to be seen. Certainly, it has already enabled a new class of women to enter formal politics; few of whom would have been able to do so otherwise. Moreover, the number of women that has entered formal politics at this tier is sufficient to mount a challenge to the dominant political culture.

NGOs, Development and Policies

Women have also accessed state power as part of the bureaucracy and have intervened in the public arena as women's organisations working for, with, and on behalf of women. The strategies adopted by organisations and individual activists are as varied as the organisations themselves. Some have used the courts to institute legal change, while others have functioned as lobbies and think-tanks. Many have provided women services, plugging the gaps in the state's services, especially in health and education. Those who identify themselves as part of the women's movement have often been at the forefront of demands for commissions to look into the problems facing women, and in formulating recommendations for change.

Unfortunately, development interventions commonly adopt a truncated view of women's lives, focusing on only one aspect while ignoring the many interstices that determine people's lives. Consequently, social and economic gains rarely convert into women's access to power in formal political processes. Not even the active participation of women in their tens of thousands in organisational enterprises, such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, and the Grameen Bank and BRAC initiatives in Bangladesh, has been able to translate economic empowerment into sustained political power. These efforts have, of course, empowered many individual women. But the challenge lies in converting such individual empowerment and self-confidence into a collective intervention that will re-fashion the rules and re-shape the spaces available to women.

For several decades, many women's advocacy organisations focused on instituting legal reforms. More recently, a significant number of them have started working at the grassroots to build capacity in a variety of ways and fields. These ways include: micro-credit schemes for economic empowerment; legal consciousness (literacy/awareness and legal aid) to build capacity for rights and advocacy; and community development programmes to build leadership and self-reliance. Some initiatives have emphasised sensitising state institutions and making them more receptive to women and their needs, with special attention on law-enforcing agencies and the judiciary. Recognising the need to enhance women's decision-making powers in the political field, and by the general focus on good governance, a few organisations have started political education and training for women who desire to enter, or are already involved in, politics.

The most important collective impact of these organisations has been to articulate women's perspectives and to place women and their issues on the national agenda of both state institutions and political parties. They have also managed to ensure that policy documents address wom-

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en's needs, and include women. Throughout South Asia, between the 1970s and 1980s, all major development plans started to address women. Some improvements have also been achieved in legal reforms. Translating policy into practice and legal provisions into *de facto* rights is, however, another matter altogether.

Organisations have been aided by allies in the state structures (often women) and by the growing acceptance of NGOs as legitimate players in policymaking. This is part of a global trend in which the legitimacy of NGOs as players has been facilitated by the growing visibility and acceptance of their role in the UN system. In the process, local organisations have been able to establish links, and they work with organisations in other countries and with international networks. With respect to women, this has been particularly evident in the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) or the Beijing process. Some of the gains made by the international women's movement have been translated into donor policies, obliging states that rely on international financial assistance to pay attention to women. External compulsions and internal lobbying have, therefore, worked together to place women on the national agendas of all South Asian states.

But an entirely different type of access to political influence is exemplified by the measure of success that South Asian women have enjoyed in exercising their negotiating abilities throughout the Beijing process.

Women's Work in the Beijing Process

The South Asian women's success in employing their negotiating abilities in the Beijing process (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) is an entirely different type of access to political influence.

In Pakistan, for example, the Beijing process catalysed the first effective working relationship between women activists and the government. The occasion was provided by the invitation of the incumbent government (during Benazir Bhutto's second term of office) to review the draft of the national report prepared by the government in March 1995. Women activists considered the hastily compiled draft to be extremely problematic, and urged the government to withhold its circulation. Departing from previous practice, the government took the advice, and then invited the non-government organisations (NGOs) to help draft a consensus report. Women activists—who had assiduously kept out of the mainstream electoral process, jealously guarded their autonomy and learned oppositional tactics under military rule—entered this process with caution.

Co-operation in preparing the national report was a positive experience for both sides and, as a result, half the official Pakistan delegation to Beijing consisted of non-government women. This encouraged women to engage more frequently with the government and bureaucracy on policy matters relating to women. A major achievement of this interaction has been the elaboration of a National Plan of Action to follow up on commitments made in Beijing. The collaboration was interrupted but survived a change of government, and it was the subsequent Nawaz Sharif government that launched in 1998 this official policy document that provides the framework for women's empowerment in all 12 areas of concern defined at the Beijing Platform for Action. Obviously, the elaboration of a policy document is only a first and insufficient step to effectuate change. Nevertheless, the National Plan of Action is an official Pakistan government policy document. Therefore, it provides women, inside and outside government, an official reference point for lobbying.

In fact, the Beijing conference and its follow-up have ensured that national action plans be elaborated throughout South Asia (and elsewhere), and that national machineries for following up on commitments made in Beijing be strengthened. The challenge now is to ensure that policy statements are converted into action that does, indeed, empower women.

Questions and Challenges

In each state, the specific configuration and dynamics of power set the parameters within which change can be instituted. To access power at any level, women need to first understand how power and influence operate in that environment—be it the family or the state—and then identify the most effective channels and vehicles available to them.

The essentialist/exclusivist politics ascendant in South Asia may provide individual women increased personal space and more power but pose a major challenge to women's collective access to power. Moreover, the nature of essentialist politics is that it feeds on itself, so that the rise of identity politics and the increasing acceptance of violence in the pursuit of such agendas have immediate implications for neighbouring states and people. Events in one country, themselves frequently linked internationally, have ramifications across South Asian borders. For instance, the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in India provoked senseless violence against buildings identified as Hindu in Pakistan, even when the people affected were, in fact, Muslims. Events in one part of the country that pit, or appear to pit, one "collective" against another will reverberate elsewhere, commonly catalysing similar or retaliatory actions and sentiments. This pushes minority communities into organising for self-protection, often resulting in a ghetto mentality, and majority communities into aggressive exclusivist actions and policies.

Sri Lanka has been embroiled in a civil war for decades, a war in which both ethnic and religious identities have divided the populace into ever more isolated and watertight segments. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, increasingly militant politico-religious parties that present undemocratic and misogynistic political agendas in a religious idiom have grown spectacularly. In some ways, they have overcome their lack of popular support, thanks to the constant concessions made to the demands and pressures by the more popular "non-religiously defined" political parties and governments (Rashid, 1996). Even where politico-religious parties do not enjoy direct power and have consistently been routed at the polls, the level of indirect influence exercised by such groups has grown to a point that is alarming.

In Pakistan, the prominent place of religious identity in the State's creation has helped legitimise the frequent and facile recourse made to religion by diverse political actors in pursuit of political power. This is not the case for India, which has maintained a secular framework. It is all the more disconcerting, therefore, that a secular framework and a fairly regular electoral process have failed to prevent the rise of communal violence, where the victims have been the minority communities—Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. Of concern, likewise, has been the electoral success of the rightwing, essentially the Hinduvta-oriented Bharatiya Janata Party. These tendencies penetrate various State institutions as well, most importantly the courts and law-enforcing agencies, which impact on the lives of a wide cross-section of society.

Several factors may contribute to the resurgent appeal of the primordial religious or ethnic identity sweeping the region. As said earlier, while the localised forms of self-adjudication and governance were neither replaced nor fully integrated into the modern state apparatus, economic policies have distributed state opportunities and benefits unequally. Far from being individuated, the state's citizens are treated, and consider themselves, as part of smaller collectivities; rather than abating, it seems that differentiations between categories of citizens have taken root. In the process, even well-meaning policies, such as reservations of jobs for disadvantaged castes or provincial regions, may have helped bolster the idea of smaller collective identities being not only a legitimate basis for deriving more benefits from the state, but possibly the most effective one. That women themselves buy into this philosophy is evident in the disturbing number of women joining and actively participating in such initiatives.

More generally, the onslaught of modernity and technological revolutions has failed to displace religion as an essential reference point for the majority of South Asia's people. The sense of alienation and injustice produced by the policies of the "New World Order" and the neo-liberal policies of globalization may contribute to a renewed assertion of a collectivity in terms that are meaningful to the average citizen, even at the cost of giving up individual agency.

The presence and nature of institutions of civil society in South Asia are pivotal to re-negotiations of the state-citizen relationship. When the state does not provide its citizens equal access to resources and benefits, it increases the importance of intermediary institutions as citizens' negotiators. In the absence of effective alternate means for self-expression and collective intervention, religious, cultural and/or ethnically defined institutions continue to play a major role in mediating between the state and its citizens. The strength of such institutions seems to rise and fall, depending on the presence and strength of alternative forums to take their place. Long periods of martial law in Pakistan have systematically undermined existing institutions and stunted the growth of strong, democratically inclined institutions of civil society. Elsewhere, too, such civil society institutions are only relatively stronger. Since women's rights flourish under democratic dispensations and weaken under authoritarian ones, it is vital that democratically inclined civil society institutions be strengthened as negotiators for women as a whole.

Linked to issues of local power and control, cultural norms commonly impede women's entry into, and full participation in, public arenas. Hence, it is just as important to modify existing cultural norms, including those shaped by religion, since these often exercise a more important control mechanism than formal law. This is particularly true in societies such as in South Asia, where people seldom govern personal matters by reference to, let alone in accordance with, formal state laws, of which they are overwhelmingly ignorant. To maintain their own influence and power as the sole mediators and adjudicators in their locality, the local elite (whether religious or secular) may actively block the entry of the state's institutions. Not coincidentally, this includes the formal state law, and its various forums and channels for participation and decision-making.

It is against this rather complex background that women seek to increase their power and influence. To alter the existing dynamics of power, therefore, requires effective interventions and linkages at many levels. Though activism takes many forms and produces multiple initiatives, each seeking to empower women, poor linkages among political actors, women in government and independent advocacy groups reduce the effectiveness of each type of activism.

In Pakistan, the disaffection between women's rights activists and politicians is historical. Democratic dispensations have rarely stayed long enough to create an environment in which politicians and rights advocates can find the trust and build the mechanisms needed to co-operate on women's issues. This lack of co-ordination is apparent in other states as well. In Nepal, for instance, despite specific legal provision for collaboration between local government and organisations of civil society, there is hardly any evidence of joint efforts by government and NGOs (Shtrii Shakti, 1999:27). By themselves, women's rights activists cannot hope to create such an environment. They do, however, need to be alert to, and identify and create, the opportunities for dialogue and long-term interaction, both among themselves, and among women activists and other actors, especially political and social forces.

Creating linkages is not always an easy task. The many women's groups do not necessarily share perceptions or priorities, and effective co-ordination amongst the various groups has been a long-standing issue. Today, the divisiveness of identity politics makes it even more important to maintain—where needed to create—strong linkages across various non-gender-based distinctions among women. For some women, participation in identity-based initiatives may appear to be the safest, sometimes the only, route to personal empowerment. In the short term, some empowerment may even be possible, but until women have the power to define the content and contours of collective identity, long-term gains are unlikely.

More on Questions and Challenges: Identity-based Politics

There is increasing concern among South Asian women in the apparent ease and visible success with which identity-based politics have mobilised a sizeable number of women. There is also alarm at the disturbing evidence of women's active complicity in the politics of exclusion and violence. Of equal concern also is the seeming inability of women's rights groups and/or human rights interventions to counter the situation effectively.

One strategy to address these concerns may be to forge better and more operative links between policy-level interventions and grassroots initiatives. Legal provisions and policy documents can only provide an opportunity. As such, they are necessary, but insufficient, conditions for bringing about widespread meaningful participation and access to power. It is important that those aiming to increase women's access to power should simultaneously create opportunities through policy and legal reforms, and engage at the grassroots to build alternative models of power and a new culture of women's agency.

A cautionary note needs to be mentioned here about the role of NGOs. Though NGOs have gained acceptance (sometimes, grudgingly) as legitimate actors in the policymaking process of states and in the UN system, they are not a replacement for political processes. Structural and systemic changes only come about through social movements. However good-willed and committed they are, NGOs rarely represent the mass will of the people, although they can be advocates and lobbies of change. In this, a crucial link is one between women's autonomous groups and women politicians. Presuming like-mindedness, the link would serve to strengthen both. Trying to avoid falling into the dominant patterns of politics, where corruption is rampant and self-aggrandisement the ultimate aim, is a difficult challenge for all politicians, whether in local or other levels of government. The dominant style of politics is a major impediment to women's participation. Links with women's organisations may provide women politicians with the support systems required to avoid this trap. Linkages would also strengthen the ability of both politicians and women's organisations to develop a new culture of political activism of their own design.

Finally, the challenges facing women today make it imperative to locate effective allies. In the past as well as the present, women have an increased access to power and have gained rights in conjunction with allies in the political and social arenas. Allies provide the first opportunity for women to put into practice a change in political culture and a sharing of power. Changing the operational framework of their allies will help to alter, in some measure, the existing framework for intervention. Modifying structures and practices of power is a slow process. Only when efficient lobbying is combined with effective political leadership rooted in direct interventions, and the different initiatives linked, can one hope to permanently change the parameters of women's lives, and their access to power and political influence.

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[Footnotes]
[1] Among the excluded have been gypsies in Europe, the blacks and natives in the U.S., or the Jews or Catholics in Protestant majority countries, and vice-versa. Indeed, the famous "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" of the French Revolution of 1789 purposefully excluded women. Fighting to assert women's right to political participation and citizenship, Olympes de Gourges who wrote the "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen" (1791) was guillotined in 1793, "accused of wanting to be a Statesman, and forgetting the virtues suitable to her sex" (Callamard, 1997:4).

[2] In his famous 1869 essay "The Subjugation of Women," Stuart Mill argued, "It is said that women do not need direct power, having so much indirect power through their influence over their male relatives and connections...it is true that women have great power. It is part of my case that they have great power; but they have it under the worst possible conditions, because it is indirect, and therefore irresponsible power..." (Stacey and Price, 1980:44).

[3] Others were: scheduled castes as a sub-section of 'general citizenry', Anglo-Indians, Europeans, Indian Christians.

4 This held true for Pakistan before the military coup of October 12, 1999.

[5] Imposition of martial law prevented national elections from being held under this provision.

source: <http://www.dawn.org.fj/publications/docs/prstshaheed2003.doc>